

Message Text

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BELGRADE ALSO FOR USDEL CSCE

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PARM, SALT, NATO, UR, US
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SUBJECT: SUPREME SOVIET PRESIDIUM MEETING: BREZHNEV ON
SOVIET-US RELATIONS

REF: (A) MOSCOW 2067 NOTAL (B) MOSCOW L858

SUMMARY: BREZHNEV'S FEB 24 REMARKS ON SOVIET-US RELATIONS
DELIVERED AT SUPREME SOVIET PRESIDIUM MEETING WERE

GENERALLY POSITIVE. HE CALLED FOR A RE-INVIGORATION OF SOVIET-US RELATIONS AND A SPEEDY CONCLUSION OF SALT II. HIS REMARKS CARRIED AN UNDERCURRENT OF SOVIET CONCERN OVER MOUNTING US CRITICISM OF SALT TALKS, PARTICULARLY IN CONGRESS. THEY ALSO REPRESENT FURTHER EVIDENCE OF SOBERING REPORT ON SOVIET-US RELATIONS PONOMAREV BROUGHT BACK FROM THE US. BREZHNEV MENTIONED BILATERAL TRADE PROBLEMS BRIEFLY IN CUSTOMARY TONE BUT IMMEDIATELY THEREAFTER CALLED FOR NEW EFFORTS TO MAKE BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP MORE CONSTRUCTIVE. IF THIS APPLIES TO ECONOMIC RELATIONS AS WELL, IT MAY INDICATE THAT SOVIET ECONOMIC PROBLEMS ARE SERIOUS AND THAT SOVIET LEADERSHIP MAY BE IN THE MOOD TO HINT AT OLIVE BRANCH TO CONGRESS. END SUMMARY.

1. SOVIET TV AND PRESS CARRIED EXERPTS FROM FEB 24, SUPREME SOVIET PRESIDIUM MEETING INCLUDING BRIEF STATEMENT BY PONOMOREV ON HIS DELEGATION'S RECENT VISIT TO THE U.S., FOLLOWED BY LONGER STATEMENT BY BREZHNEV ASSESSING THE DELEGATION'S US VISIT AND COMMENTING ON SOVIET-U.S. RELATIONS IN GENERAL, THE SALT NEGOTIATIONS, NEUTRON BOMB, AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS.

2. U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS: GENERAL: BREZHNEV BEGAN BY DECLARING THAT INTER-PARLIAMENTARY CONTACTS SUCH AS RECENT PONOMAREV VISIT "OCCUPY A SPECIAL PLACE IN THE INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITY OF THE SOVIET UNION", AND CARRY CONFIDENTIAL

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"PARTICULAR SIGNIFICANCE" FOR THE U.S. CONGRESS AS WELL. HE DESCRIBED PONOMAREV DELEGATION AS PERFORMING "USEFUL WORK" IN THE U.S. AND FAVORABLY NOTED SOVIET INVITATION FOR CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION TO VISIT THE USSR. BREZHNEV ALSO REFERRED TO VARIOUS US-SOVIET INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS AND TREATIES CONCLUDED AT A HIGH LEVEL IN RECENT YEARS, STATING THAT "THE POSSIBILITY EXISTS TO DEEPEN AND WIDEN COOPERATION FURTHER BETWEEN THE U.S. AND SOVIET UNION." TOWARDS THE END OF HIS SPEECH, BREZHNEV CALLED FOR NEW FORWARD MOVEMENT IN SOVIET-US RELATIONS, SO AS TO INSTILL IN THEM A "DYNAMIC AND CONSTRUCTIVE CHARACTER." THE SUPREME SOVIET AND THE U.S. CONGRESS, HE STATED, HAVE "THEIR OWN ROLE" TO PLAY IN THIS REGARD.

3. SALT, NEUTRON BOMB, ECONOMIC COOPERATION: MOVING TO SPECIFICS, BREZHNEV ASSERTED THAT PROGRESS IN U.S.-SOVIET COOPERATION HAD BEEN "RETARDED BY A NUMBER OF OBSTACLES CREATED BY THOSE NOT INTERESTED IN EITHER GOOD NEIGHBORLY SOVIET-U.S. RELATIONS OR IN INTERNATIONAL DETENTE. IN ADDITION, HE:
- STATED THAT, WHILE THE SALT TALKS HAVE MADE "NOTABLE

PROGRESS" IT IS NEVERTHELESS CLEAR THAT SOME IN THE U.S. WOULD LIKE TO RETARD THE COURSE OF THESE NEGOTIATIONS, AND TO HINDER THEIR SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION. HE REMARKED THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE A NUMBER OF TIMES MADE THEIR POSITION KNOWN TO THE WHITE HOUSE AND TO THE U.S. CONGRESS IN VARIOUS FORMS AND THERE WAS NO NEED TO REPEAT IT BUT HE WANTED TO RESTATE SOVIET SUPPORT FOR QUICK CONCLUSION OF THE SALT II NEGOTIATIONS ON THE BASIS OF THE PRINCIPLE OF EQUAL SECURITY, NOTING THAT SUCH A SIGNING WILL BE FOLLOWED BY THE NEXT PHASE OF STRATEGIC ARMS LIMITATION. BREZHNEV CONCLUDED HIS REMARKS ON SALT, STATING THAT HE HOPES THAT "RESPONSIBLE FIGURES" IN THE USA UNDERSTAND

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R 251332Z FEB 78
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HOW MUCH IS AT STAKE.

- REPEATED SOVIET OPPOSITION TO THE PRODUCTION AND
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DEPLOYMENT IN EUROPE OF THE NEUTRON BOMB WHICH HE CLAIMED
IS BEING ADVOCATED BY "MILITARY CIRCLES IN THE US". HE
REPEATED THE SOVIET PROPOSAL FOR MUTUAL RENUNCIATION OF
PRODUCTION OF THE NEUTRON BOMB AND SAID THAT THE ONLY
ALTERNATIVE TO SUCH RENUNCIATION WOULD BE A NEW
QUALITATIVE SPIRAL IN THE ARMS RACE.

- TOUCHED BRIEFLY ON "ECONOMIC AND SCIENTIFIC TECHNOLOGI-
CAL COOPERATION", CITING "ARTIFICIALLY CREATED PROBLEMS"
WHICH HE TRACED IN ESSENCE TO ATTEMPTS BY U.S. CONGRESS
TO INTERFERE IN SOVIET DOMESTIC AFFAIRS. IT WAS AT THIS
POINT THAT HE MENTIONED THE NEED TO MAKE NEW EFFORTS TO
GIVE THIS RELATIONSHIP A DYNAMIC AND MORE CONSTRUCTIVE
CHARACTER.

4. IN CLOSING, BREZHNEV, STATED HIS DESIRE "TO ONCE
AGAIN EMPHASIZE THAT WE CONSIDER SOVIET-US RELATIONS
AS AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN THE GENERAL INTERNATIONAL
COURSE OF THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT, A COURSE FOR THE
STRENGTHENING OF PEACE, ENDING THE ARMS RACE AND
DEVELOPING EQUAL AND MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL COOPERATION
AMONG GOVERNMENTS."

5. PRAVDA ACCOUNT OF SUPREME SOVIET PRESIDIUM MEETING
FOLLOWS UP BREZHNEV'S COMMENTS WITH STATEMENT THAT THE
PRESIDIUM "IN APPROVING THE WORK" OF THE PONOMAREV
DELEGATION TO THE U.S., NOTED THAT CONTACTS BETWEEN
THE SUPREME SOVIET AND THE U.S. CONGRESS IS AN "IMPORTANT
FACTOR FOR ASSISTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF COOPERATION
BETWEEN OUR COUNTRIES IN THE INTERESTS OF SOVIET AND
AMERICAN PEOPLE, DEEPENING DETENTE AND STRENGTHENING
INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY." THE PRESIDIUM
CONFIRMED INVITATIONS FOR SENATE AND HOUSE DELEGATIONS
TO MAKE OFFICIAL VISITS TO USSR.

6. COMMENT: WE VIEW BREZHNEV'S APPEAL FOR A RE-INVIGOR-
ATION OF SOVIET-US RELATIONS IN GENERAL AS THE MOST
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NOTEWORTHY ASPECT OF HIS REMARKS. IN ADDITION, HIS
REFERENCES TO SALT, LIKE THE FEB 11 PRAVDA
ARTICLE (REF A) AND USTINOV'S FEB 22 SPEECH, APPEAR

DESIGNED TO REGISTER YET AGAIN SOVIET SUPPORT FOR A RAPID CONCLUSION TO THE SALT TALKS. BREZHNEV'S STATEMENT IS ALSO NOTEWORTHY FOR ITS UNDERCURRENT OF CONCERN OVER US BASED OPPOSITION TO SOVIET-US RELATIONS AND THE SALT NEGOTIATIONS PARTICULARLY IN CONGRESS. THIS CONCERN IS CLEARLY REGISTERED IN BREZHNEV'S POSITIVE REFERENCES TO CONGRESS, INCLUDING HIS STATEMENTS ON THE VALUE OF SOVIET-US INTER-PARLIAMENTARY CONTACTS, THE U.S. CONGRESS' ROLE IN ASSISTING THE POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT OF SOVIET-U.S. RELATIONS, AND HIS FAVORABLE REFERENCE TO THE ANTICIPATED RETURN VISIT OF US CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION TO THE USSR. AS IN CASE OF THE PRAVDA SALT EDITORIAL, WE ALSO READ BREZHNEV'S REMARKS AS FURTHER EVIDENCE OF THE SOBERING REPORT THE PONOMAREV DELEGATION BROUGHT BACK FROM THE U.S. (REF B).

7. THE CONTEXT OF BREZHNEV'S BRIEF REFERENCE TO U.S.-SOVIET ECONOMIC RELATIONS STRIKES US AS SLIGHTLY MORE EVEN-HANDED THAN USUAL, IF NOT IN ASCRIFTION OF THE BLAME, THEN AT LEAST IN THE PURSUIT OF A SOLUTION TO MAKE THE RELATIONSHIP MORE CONSTRUCTIVE. IN THIS CONNECTION IT IS POSSIBLE THAT HIS REFERENCE TO PARLIMENTARY ROLES WAS MADE WITH AN EYE TO THE SOVIET INVITATION FOR A VISIT BY SENATOR JACKSON WHICH HAS NOT YET BEEN ANNOUNCED HERE. BREZHNEV'S REMARKS MAY ALSO REFLECT SOVIET RECOGNITION THAT USSR'S ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES ARE MOUNTING. WHILE THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN TRADE FORECASTS THE VIRTUAL DISAPPEARANCE OF BILATERAL TRADE IN NON-AGRICULTURAL ITEMS, THE PLANNERS AND PRODUCERS OF THE USSR DO NOT.

8. IN SUM, ALTHOUGH BREZHNEV'S STATEMENT CONTAINS THE USUAL DOSAGE OF SOVIET SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS, THE OVER-ALL

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TONE AND CONTENT IS CLEARLY POSITIVE. IT IS PROBABLY
INTENDED BY SOVIETS AS GESTURE TO INDICATE SOVIET IN-
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TEREST IN REINVIGORATING SOVIET-U.S. RELATIONS AND IN
CONCLUDING A SALT ACCORD QUICKLY. MATLOCK

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN RELATIONS, PRESIDIUM, MEETINGS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 25 feb 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978MOSCOW02893
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780088-0187
Format: TEL
From: MOSCOW USSALTTWO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
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Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780213/aaaaakgk.tel
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Litigation History:
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Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 6
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 MOSCOW 2067, 78 MOSCOW 858
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 25 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3476555
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SUPREME SOVIET PRESIDIUM MEETING: BREZHNEV ON SOVIET-US RELATIONS
TAGS: PARM, PEPR, UR, US, NATO
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/6aa1b5cf-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014